THE REAL JACKIE KENNEDY—V

'Book Battle' Causes Backlash of World Opinion

By LIZ SMITH
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It was toward the end of summer that Jacqueline Kennedy began having second thoughts about the information she had furnished William Manchester for his book on the late President's death.

In the beginning, she had evidently felt that Manchester—a writer of whom JFK approved—was the man to do the job.

She felt so deeply that the Manchester book had to be the single authorized version

Fifth in a six-part series: National magazine writer Liz Smith relates the beginnings of the "book battle."

of the assassination that she refused to give help to another writer, Jim Bishop, who wanted to do a book in the same vein as his best-seller, "The Day Lincoln Was Shot."

Both Drew Pearson and The Wall Street Journal printed stories that Mrs. Kennedy had urged people not to cooperate with Bishop and had brought pressure on his publisher, Random House, to keep such a book from being printed.

Senator Involved

Pearson involved Robert Kennedy in the story, portraying him as the "hatchet man" for his sister-in-law. Bishop himself said that the Kennedys were trying to "copyright the assassination."

Strong words of "Kennedy dictatorship" and "censorship" began to fly in the publishing world. In the meantime, the Manchester book had been rushed to completion and excerpts sold for one of the largest sums in history to Look magazine.

Despite Manchester's avowals that "no one tried to lead me," that his work was not being interfered with by the Kennedys, it is known that Bobby Kennedy had teams of his people, including former presidential speechwriter Richard Goodwin, going over the book from April on, and virtually rewriting parts of it.

The book turned out to be highly prejudicial and anti-LBJ. U.S. News and World Report stated that "President Johnson and his friends have never accepted for a minute the idea that the Kennedys have 'lost control' of the Manchester manuscript. One quoted Sen. Kennedy as saying in a private conversation: 'It's our manuscript and we can release it at our leisure.'"

But what Bobby Kennedy lost control of was not so much the Manchester manuscript, but of Jackie, and it happened pretty much like this:

Jackie had never read the account, feeling it would be too painful. Obviously she didn't believe Manchester intended to include in the book certain intimate matters she had confided in the taped catharsis just after the tragedy.

—Star Photographer Rosemary Martuffi

Arthur Schlesinger Jr. was among those who backed Jackie Kennedy in the battle over the Manchester book. Here they are shown leaving the Rive Gauche restaurant in Georgetown.

Meantime, Bobby was handling matters relating to the book, but either his communications with Jackie lapsed or he didn't consider it all so important that he couldn't "fix" whatever she might object to.

The result was another brother-in-law, Lee's husband, Stash Radziwill, read the manuscript and complained to Jackie, "You'd better read it."

Stash has been described by one friend as Jackie's Eminence Grise, exerting a subtle influence over her in contrast to Bobby's more direct paterfamilias attitude.

Jackie insisted on a showdown with Manchester and Look's publisher Gardner Cowles. The story is that she asked them to fly up to Hyannisport and they did so, at no inconsiderable inconvenience.

Jackie met them, barefooted and smiling, on the private air strip. She was in a gay, friendly mood.

But after they settled down for a drink back at the compound, she simply asked Look to restrict publication. She regretted the whole thing. She didn't want the agony of the promotion and seeing it in print, and besides, there were the children to think of.

Would Cowles, as a friend, cancel the publication? Would Manchester, who had been so kind and understanding during their painful interviews, forego publishing?

Both explained that they could not back out.

Unpleasant

It is said that the meeting ended unpleasantly—that Jackie raged and turned into a veritable virago. "She reverted to being Jackie Bouvier and blew her French cool," said someone.

After that, Look began promoting the Manchester excerpts with a dignified vengeance and Cowles' own name went onto the circulation promotion mailing pieces.

Evidently Look, Manchester and his publisher, Harper & Row, all decided to take a calculated risk.

They thought Jackie was bluffing and would never go through the horrible publicity of a lawsuit. They were wrong, in spades.

This time she not only acted, but Bobby acted in concert with her.

Though the resulting publicity has created an international furor, a sympathy backlash for President Johnson, and may even have damaged Bobby's political future, Jackie was and is adamant.

She forced the concessions she wanted from Look, which began publishing an expurgated version. Harper & Row postponed the book until April in an effort to settle the matter out of court.

World opinion has backlashed onto both Jackie and Bobby.

U.S. News & World Report termed the Manchester book a "possible instrument of destruction" and defended LBJ against allegations of power-grabbing and boorish behavior after the assassination. They also cited 16 points positively in the President's favor.

Murray Kempton wrote an eloquent defense of Manchester, stating that he had suffered "the awful discovery that to the Kennedy family, he was only an object, no more to be respected than any servant of a great house. . . ."

Reporter Ruth Montgomery chided the Kennedys for their restrictions on the writer, for his acceptance of their terms, and then took Bobby and Jackie to task for failure to read the book in the first place.

It all became just the most dramatic in a series of Jacqueline-in-relation-to-the-press events which have caused one sardonic and gifted New York writer to say:

"If you interview her and it is printed, you will find she never speaks to you again. She is so quixotic, she simply shouldn't even talk to the press. She just makes life difficult for herself and for us, and this time she's made it difficult for Bobby. All that old emotional blackmail about the children isn't quite fair, not after she has talked so freely."

Although Arthur Schlesinger Jr. defended Jackie in regard to the Manchester work, another prominent ex from the New Frontier coterie has remarked candidly: "Yes, she always talks to the press and she always retracts."

He was thinking of Theodore White's bitter experience in writing the classic "Camelot" tribute to JFK in Life.

White Refused

Mrs. Kennedy didn't like that either when it appeared, despite White's devotion to the late President. (Naturally when it was offered, White refused to take on the commission Manchester later accepted.)

Even more recently, there was the unhappy consequence to JFK's best friend, "Red" Fay, whose pleasantly chummy, colloquial and warm-hearted memoir, "The Pleasure of His Company," estranged him from the Kennedys. (Jackie turned down a $3,000 gift from Fay for the Memorial Library early in December.)

These unpleasantnesses, stemming from Jackie's volatile super-sensitivity, must hurt her too. But she seems to have decided once and for all that she is now going to speak and act for herself.

Basically deferential to him, she burst from under Bobby's restraining hand when she decided that somehow the Manchester book threatened the privacy and peace of mind of her children.

"After all," says one friend, "she has the children and they are hers. She always has had a funny private me-mine air. I remember when they moved to the Kennedy compound in Hyannisport, it was one big happy family for a while, but after the Democratic convention in 1960, Jackie had a high stockade fence put up, mainly to keep out the multitude of Kennedy cousins, and all their menagerie."

TOMORROW — Whatever the questions and answers, Jackie was trying to pursue happiness.

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